

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER



Camp Dodge, Building 3663, 7105 NW 70th Avenue, Johnston, IA 50131
515-242-5331 800-838-4692 <https://va.iowa.gov>

Winter 2011

A Message from IDVA's Director



IDVA Executive Director
Jodi Tymeson

It's an honor to be serving as the Executive Director, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. I'm learning quickly how many people and organizations in Iowa are serving veterans and their families. We're working hard to improve communication and coordinate our efforts. IDVA's focus will be on working closely with the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, all the County Commissions and County Executive Directors, as well as all our public, private, and nonprofit partners. I can't overstate the importance of good communication — clear communication with veterans requesting our help, and good communication with all of us in the network of service providers. Education is also a key to our success. We'll need to work hard to keep current on all policy and rule changes, at both the federal and state level.

We've been updating the IDVA website. Be sure to make this one of your favorites and visit often. We are working to reach out to every generation of veteran, and we must embrace the electronic media while keeping our doors open for those who want to visit us in person.

We are currently in the planning stage for the upcoming Spring School of Instruction (16 CEUs) for County Executive Directors. The April school will be held in Des Moines, but I have expressed the willingness to look at moving the school around the state. I welcome your suggestions on how to improve the quality of instruction and ways to hold down costs. We will conduct a training session for new county commissioners in the fall.

It's been a busy first month for me, and I look forward to all the upcoming opportunities to serve veterans and families. ★ Jodi Tymeson, Executive Director, IDVA

Governor Branstad's Goals for Iowa Military

On Inauguration Day, Governor Branstad put on his uniform and conducted a Salute to the National Guard at the State Capitol. He and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds expressed their commitment to military members, veterans, and veterans' families. *The following is an excerpt from Governor Brandstad's budget summary:*

Since September 11, 2001, Iowa's military members have been called upon for an inordinate amount of duty at a great cost to them and their families. Many military members have been deployed multiple times since the war began.

In 2010, over 3,100 Army National Guard soldiers deployed for overseas missions, along with the deployment of 740 airmen from Iowa's three Air National Guard bases, to serve as overseas military support for our country. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corp Reserves provided significant assets to overseas deployments in 2010, as well as hundreds of active duty Iowans serving in our armed forces as members of the Army, Air, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard.

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IDVA Welcomes a New Director

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs welcomes Jodi Tymeson as its new executive director! Jodi brings a wealth of experience with her to IDVA. She is the first female promoted to brigadier general in the Iowa Army National Guard; she retired from the Guard in 2007 with 33 years of service. From 2001-2010



she served as state representative for Madison, Warren, and Dallas counties.

IDVA looks forward to Jodi's leadership and her commitment to serving and working with all the veteran organizations and advocates throughout Iowa.



Continued from page 1

To serve current veterans, as well as the influx of new veterans, Iowa must be prepared to recognize the sacrifices these veterans have made, provide the services they need, and develop the means by which veterans can be made aware of and access these services.

To that end, Governor Branstad proposes the following goals toward supporting Iowa's active military, guard and reserve members:

Create a State Income Tax Exemption for All Active Duty Personnel

The men and women who are actively serving in the military, come from every community in Iowa and from every walk of life. States such as Texas and Florida do not have state income tax. Other states, such as Kentucky and Oklahoma, have recently passed state income tax exemptions for their active duty military. We must do all we can to ensure that Iowa is competitive in encouraging Iowa soldiers and airmen to return to their home state following their service. Their decision to remain in Iowa allows them to continue to work, shop, and pay taxes in Iowa, as well as continuing to be active in their local communities. This tax exemption rewards returning members of the military for their service, dedication, and willingness to protect the rights and freedom we all enjoy.

Commitment to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund

The Iowa Veterans Trust Fund, funded primarily by a specially-designated Iowa Lottery ticket, has been a tremendous asset to Iowa veterans. Currently the fund contains approximately \$10.8 million and grows by about \$2 million each year through receipts from the Iowa Lottery and donations. Governor Branstad will commit to protecting the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund proceeds to ensure they are not diverted by the Iowa Legislature for General Fund purposes. He will also work to protect the integrity of the funds by ensuring they are used to meet the needs of Iowa veterans.

Providing Leadership for Collaboration

Governor Branstad will provide leadership to facilitate collaboration among the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, the Iowa Veterans Affairs Commissioners, the Iowa Association of County Veterans Service Officers, and other veterans' service organizations. The goal of the collaborative efforts is to develop a more accessible and easier process to ensure all Iowa veterans are made aware of, and are able to access the services for which they are eligible.

Create an Iowa Veterans Job Bank

To further facilitate the ability of employers to connect with returning skilled military personnel, Governor Branstad will direct the Iowa Department of Workforce Development and the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs to partner and develop a web portal. This portal will provide an easy, direct route to connect employers with trained and dedicated veterans seeking employment.

"Honoring Iowa's Eternal Patriots" Exhibit

In early 2006, Jerry Brown, Exhibit Designer for the State Historical Society of Iowa, was asked by Governor Vilsack's office to design an exhibit featuring a photographic tribute to Iowa's recently fallen soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. The title selected for the exhibit, by a consensus of opinion, was "Honoring Iowa's Eternal Patriots." The concept was simple — a photographic tribute to the recently fallen soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Originally, the exhibit was located just outside the governor's office, but in 2007, due to spatial concerns, it was moved to a larger display case near the first floor rotunda. Brown's primary involvement with this exhibit has been to develop an overall design, to fabricate the graphic panels, and to install and maintain various exhibit components.

Brown stated: "Over the years, numerous individuals have made generous contributions to the success of this

exhibit. Mandi Wimmer, the special events coordinator for Governor Vilsack's office, was instrumental in her capacity as project manager. Michael Vogt, curator of the Iowa Goldstar Military Museum at Camp Dodge, provided knowledgeable input while the exhibit was still in the planning stages and has since loaned the use of relevant military items that have enhanced the scope of the exhibit. Of special note would be Col. Gregory Hapgood, the public affairs officer with the Iowa National Guard, who provided copies of many of the photographs used in the exhibit, as well as invaluable information. Mention should also be made of Tom Hardie and Vern Tyler, retired museum technicians with the State Historical Society, and the Newton Work Release program, all of whom were very helpful during the construction phase of this project. Credit should also be given to the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs for their ongoing support."

We thank Mr. Brown for his stunning and moving vision that honors Iowa's Fallen Soldiers.



Two views of the "Honoring Iowa's Eternal Patriots" exhibit located in Iowa's Capitol rotunda

Best Wishes to Patrick Palmersheim

We at IDVA warmly say goodbye to long-time Executive Director Patrick Palmersheim, who directed the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs from January 2002 to January 2011.

Patrick was extremely successful in creating a new vision for the veterans of Iowa — particularly the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, the Veterans Trust Fund, Veterans outreach, and



Pat with Medal of Honor recipient Sal Giunta and former Governor Culver

many many more accomplishments. He was instrumental in moving IDVA into the 21st century, yet still maintained a personal touch for his relationships with Iowa veterans.

We sincerely wish Patrick great success in his future endeavors, and extend our sincere thanks for all that he has done for veterans.

Iowa Veterans Cemetery News

Wreaths Across America

On December 11th at 11:00 a.m., the Iowa Veterans Cemetery continued the tradition of Wreaths Across America™ by laying wreaths on every headstone and columbaria plaza, and each memorial as an annual remembrance of the sacrifice that our veterans have made. This is the 3rd year that IDVA has participated in the ceremony.



Iowa Veterans Cemetery — December 11, 2010

Thanks to generous donations from Caseys, Prairie Meadows, and individual families, Wreaths Across America™ delivered over 635 wreaths to be placed on the graves at Iowa Veterans Cemetery. Another commitment to this project included a multitude of volunteers who participated in the laying of the wreaths, including the Knights of Columbus and the Civil Air Patrol IA-007 Northwest Iowa Composites Squadron. The Civil Air Patrol also provided an Honor Guard for the ceremony.



Iowa Flag Flies in Afghanistan and Returns to Iowa

On the 11th of February 2011, Adam Ringo and Bruce Watson presented IDVA Director, Jodi Tymeson with an Iowa flag that had flown honorably(with the New Jersey state flag) from October 22nd - 26th at the NMCB 21 armory in Afghanistan. We thank them for allowing us the honor of displaying the Iowa flag at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery.



Iowa Flag flying in Afghanistan



Director Tymeson, Adam Ringo, Bruce Watson

Adam Ringo, Gunner's Mate Second Class Petty Officer, was deployed to Afghanistan with the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 21 (NMCB 21) — based out of Lakehurst, New Jersey. He had a full year's deployment, and spent 8 months in-country at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan. Also serving in his reserve unit that deployed with NMCB21 were Chief Petty Officer Bruce Watson — stationed at Kandahar Air Field, and Chief Petty Officer John Tveiten — stationed with a detachment of NMCB 21 in a different area of the Middle Eastern Theatre.

Iowa Veterans Cemetery News Con't.



IVC Cemetery Update

Keith Blum, IVC Superintendent reports: "Spring is almost here. The snow is gone — we hope. We are observing a lot of wet ground. The frost appears to be out of the ground and we are trying to stay off the wet grounds so we don't have a lot to repair. We are also looking at fertilizer and grass seed although we won't need much seed because we are using sod around all grave sites."

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery reports that through the end of January there are:

Applications on file: 4,950 ♦ Dependents interred: 114 ♦ Interments: 763 ♦ *In Memory of* markers: 24



Iowa's Fallen Hero

Spc. Shawn A. Muhr, 26, a Coon Rapids native serving on active duty in the U.S. Army, died January 29th in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Muhr, the driver of a Heavy Equipment Transporter System, was part of a convoy when his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb. Also killed was Spc. Joshua R. Campbell, 22, of Bennett, Colorado. Both were assigned to the 546th Transportation Company, 264th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 82nd Sustainment Brigade, Fort Bragg, NC. Muhr had previously been deployed to South Korea and Iraq, as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and was assigned to Afghanistan in October 2010.

His awards and decorations include the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal-Campaign Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, and the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star Medal, and the combat Action Badge — awarded posthumously.

Muhr was a 2003 graduate of Coon Rapids-Bayard High School, where he wrestled and played football. He placed sixth in his weight class in the 2003 state wrestling tournament, and he held a school record for pins.

Muhr is survived by his wife, Winifred V. Olchawa and stepson, Devin M. Olchawa; his father, David Muhr, and brother, Aaron Muhr, both of Coon Rapids; sisters Dee Scheuermann, of Mount Carmel, Iowa, Vennessa Warneka, of Carroll, Erica Muhr-Burris, of Scranton; and many nieces and nephews. Burial was at Union Township Cemetery in Coon Rapids, Iowa.



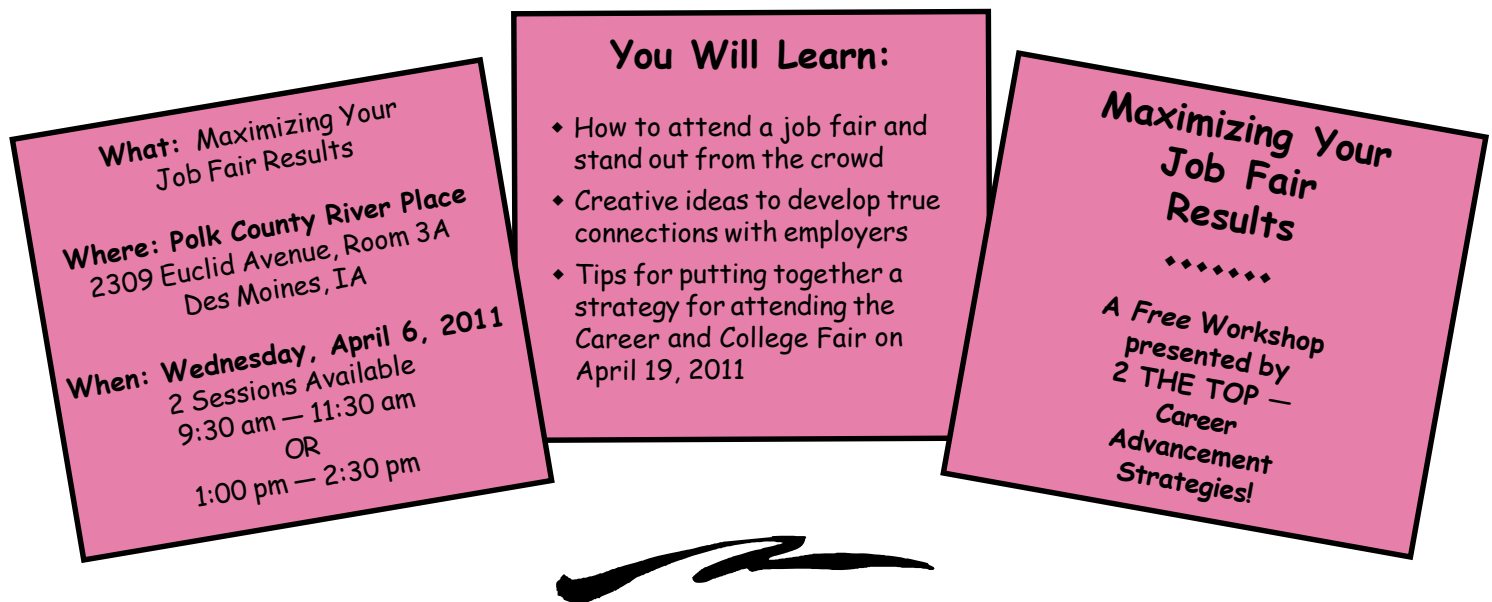
Army Spc. Shawn Muhr

Shawn was the 75th person with Iowa ties who has died in Iraq, Afghanistan, or other combat zones since the Iraq war began in March 2003.

Upcoming Events

Maximizing Your Job Fair Results

The 2011 Career/Resources Expo (Tuesday, April 19, 2011) will be one of the best opportunities all year to connect with employers, education providers, and other special resources from the community – including veterans! But before you go, consider attending a free workshop that will help you maximize your job fair results:



Ever attended a job fair and then wondered what you were doing there? Feel like job fairs are a waste of time? If you answered “Yes” to either of these questions, then this topic of discussion is for you.

During this presentation we will discuss how to attend a job fair and stand out from the crowd, creative ideas to help you develop true connections with employers and how to put together a strategy for attending the 2011 Career/Resource Expo, planned by Iowa Workforce Development on Tuesday, April 19th, 2011. This Career/Resource Expo will consist of four unique elements.

1. Employers
2. Colleges/Education Institution's
3. Boot Strap Expo/Resources for the Community
4. Military/Veterans Specific Information

If you are currently in job search, you can't afford to go into the event without a plan! The 2011 Career Resource Expo is brought to you by Iowa Workforce Development and Des Moines Area Community College. (See next page.)

Presenter: Cassandra Halls, 2 THE TOP-Career Advancement Strategies

Seating is limited so arrive early to ensure your spot. (Seating capacity is 90 people each session.)

For more information contact:

Cassandra Halls, 2 The Top Career Advancement Strategies
(515)-473-4980 c.halls@mchsi.com

Upcoming Events Con't.

Workforce Development Sponsors Career and College Fair

Mark Your Calendars!

***Region 11 Workforce Development's
Career & Resources Expo
Polk County Convention Center
Tuesday, April 19, 2011***

The Career/Resource Expo will include:

- (1) A traditional Career Fair — uniting employers to people looking for jobs; Iowa Work Force Development is bringing 100 Central Iowa employers looking to hire Central Iowa job applicants
- (2) An Education Fair — uniting people in need of specific skills to gain employment with programs offering these skills; and
- (3) Boot Straps (starting your own business) — an opportunity for participants to learn how to start a business and the services and assistance available in doing so.

There will be a special veterans' component focused on the 14,490 veterans enrolled in Iowa colleges and universities using the GI Bill, as well as the 26,000 Guard, Reserve, and active duty military members serving in Iowa, and Iowa's veteran and military populations (those who did serve in the military, retired from the military, or have been medically discharged from the military). OEF/OIF veterans are experiencing an unemployment rate of 16%, and the career fair will help them identify the career services available to them from WFD, from colleges and universities, and others.

It is one of the workshop's goals to advise veterans on what services are available to them after graduation. Iowa Workforce Development will be there to advise veterans and present workshops; Iowa colleges and universities will identify education programs leading directly to employments.

Workshops will be available during the event and will include the following:

- ♦ Job Search — Resumé writing for the general public and resumé writing for veterans to convert military resumé to civilian resumé
- ♦ Dressing for Success
- ♦ Differentiate between degrees, diplomas, and certificates
- ♦ How to complete an application online
- ♦ Interview skills — What to say & not to say during an interview
- ♦ School application process — FAFSA form, financial aid, etc.
- ♦ When to start looking for a job

For more information on attending, sponsoring or any aspect of the expo, please contact:

Steve McCann, IWD, Stephen.McCann@iwd.iowa.gov, 515.242.5027

Tom Beasley, DE, Thomas.Beasley@iowa.gov, 515.339.4523

Upcoming Events Con't.



We All Serve...



ESGR, along with Iowa Works, will be hosting an Employment Assistance Training workshop on April 18, 2011 at the University of Phoenix campus in West Des Moines. This event is free to all military veterans and spouses. The agenda will cover many topics that help make a job search successful. Please spread the word to as many troops and family members as possible. Class size will be limited to 30 students and will be filled based off the following priority: unemployed military, underemployed

military, and unemployed spouses. Those wishing to attend the class need to fax a copy of the registration (reproduced below) to Ray Rodriguez at 515-252-4519. ESGR looks forward to seeing service members and spouses on April 18th!

Ray Rodriguez, Iowa ESGR/PSM
Office - 515-252-4192 Cell - 515-864-1088
Fax - 515-252-4519

IOWA ESGR EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TRAINING – APRIL 18, 2011

Are you unemployed or unsatisfied with your current job?

Iowa ESGR and its partners are here to help! We will be hosting a FREE one day Employment Assistance Training (EAT) workshop guided towards helping service members and military spouses find jobs.

When and where will this free training be offered?

The EAT workshop will be held at the University of Phoenix's West Des Moines campus, located at 6600 Westtown Parkway, 2nd Floor, West Des Moines, IA 50266. The workshop will begin at 7:45 a.m. and end at approximately 5:00 p.m. A free lunch sponsored by ESGR will be served to all attendees of the course.

What will I learn at the workshop?

- ♦ How to deal with job searching stress by conducting a personal work skills appraisal.
- ♦ How to make career decisions by using SMART goals.
- ♦ Steps required for searching and applying to job openings.
- ♦ Interviewing techniques.
- ♦ Reviewing job offers.
- ♦ Support and assistance agencies for veterans and military spouses.
- ♦ The online job search.
- ♦ Resume; building and personal reviews.
- ♦ Practice job interviews and critiques

Email (ramon.h.rodriguez2.ctr@us.army or Fax (515-252-4519) registration by Friday, April 15, 2011 to: Ramon Rodriguez (Iowa Committee for ESGR) ♦ Telephone Number: 800-294-6607 x4192

Name: _____

Home address: _____

Military Unit: ANG ARNG USAR USMCR USNR USAFR USCGR

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Upcoming Events Con't.

Remembrance Run: Honoring Iowa's Fallen Sunday, September 18, 2011

The 2nd annual Remembrance Run, honoring Iowa's fallen, will be held on Sunday, September 18, 2011. This 5K run/walk honors and remembers fallen service members from the state of Iowa. Also honored and welcomed home will be the soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division. Look for more details in upcoming IDVA newsletters.

Event Details

Date/Time:

5K Run/Walk - Sunday, September 18, 10:00 a.m.

Location:

Saylorville Lake, Sandpiper Recreation Area

Fees:

Through September 8, 2011 — \$25

September 8-15 — \$30 (T-shirts not guaranteed)

Questions?

Visit: <http://www.iowaremembrancerun.com>



Jones County Veterans Open House

Who: All Veterans are invited and encouraged to attend!

When: Tuesday, March 22, 2011, 4:00 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.

Where: Veterans Memorial Hall

Mary Lovell LeVan Renaissance Center

220 E. 1st Street, Monticello, Iowa

For more info, contact Susan Yario for more info: 319.462.5311 syario@co.jones.ia.us

Audubon County Open House & Outreach

What: Veterans Open House and Outreach
VA Benefits and Services

When: March 25, 12:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.

March 26, 9:00 a.m. — 1:00 p.m.

Where: Audubon Armory

601 Southside Drive

Audubon, IA 50025

For more info, contact: Cindy Niemack-Brown: 866.580.1819 ext. 9-2287 or Gary Riesgaard: 712.563.3508

Veterans College Fair

Who: For all military, reservists, veterans, dependents, and spouses

What: Event is geared specifically for veterans to learn how to ease the transition from military to academic life.

When: Monday, March 28, 2011, 3:00 p.m. — 6:00 p.m.

Where: Tama Hall

Hawkeye Community College

Waterloo, IA

For more info, contact: Dave Ball: 319.296.4000 david.ball@hawkeyecollege.edu

Upcoming Events Con't.



Vietnam War's 50th Anniversary

Vietnam Veterans of America welcomed the announcement by the Department of Defense to move forward with plans to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. After more than three decades after the war's end, they have begun a project to pay tribute to the nation's Vietnam War veterans.

This long-awaited news signifies that, at last, the Defense Department will move forward with plans to fulfill the intent of the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act and support a full range of events to achieve the objectives outlined in the legislation. These include:

- ♦ Thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans;
- ♦ Highlight the service of the armed forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the armed forces;
- ♦ Pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War;
- ♦ Highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to the military research conducted during the Vietnam War. (*Source: VVA*)

At the center of the project is a website, "50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration," which will serve as a clearinghouse for information on the war once it is fully functional...a milestone expected this Spring. Find it here: <http://www.vietnamwar50th.com>.

Information gleaned from the website is expected to be used for myriad purposes, such as to chronicle facts, provide educational materials, and offer resources for a commemorative partners program.

The partners program will comprise guidance and materials for agencies, veterans groups, local government, and non-government organizations to conduct their own Vietnam War commemoration activities.

The website is expected to play a major role in the campaign, said Jeff Wilson, who handles marketing for the project, noting it will be highly interactive and will include content on historical events, a timeline, photos, documents, video and audio. A calendar will list major Defense-sponsored events. (*Source: Terri Moon Cronk, American Forces Press Service*)

Local Iowa Commemoration of Vietnam War

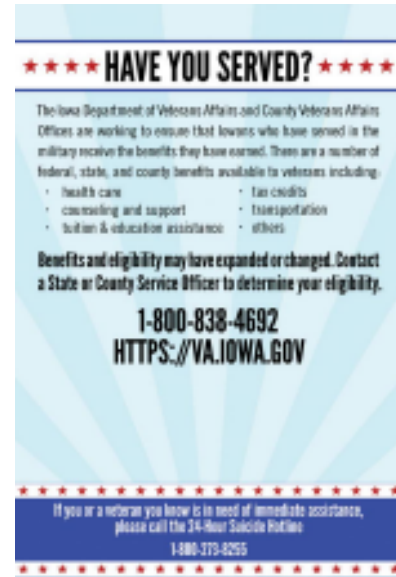
A traveling, ¾-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., is coming to West Des Moines September 16-18, 2011, and Resthaven Cemetery needs help preparing for its arrival. Dedicated to Vietnam Veterans and honoring all U.S. Veterans, the Dignity Memorial® Vietnam Wall is 240 feet long, eight feet high, and contains the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died or are missing in Vietnam. You can honor their sacrifice by joining a committee and helping plan for the three-day exhibition.

Additionally, consider joining the "Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall Motorcycle Escort," on September 14th. VVA is asking for as many bikers as possible. The escort will begin at Prairie Meadows, escorting the Semi Tractor Trailer through Altoona, Des Moines, and West Des Moines — ending at Resthaven Cemetery. Lunch will be served after the ceremony.

For more information, contact Rita Brim, McLaren's Resthaven Chapel: 515-223-1230.

News Briefs

Veterans' Outreach Postcard



The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs is very pleased to announce that the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) is partnering with IDVA by distributing postcards (pictured above) in all 100 DOT license centers (and other venues) around the state of Iowa. State Public Policy Group (SPPG) provided inspired creativity by designing and coordinating the printing and distribution of the cards. DOT clerks will ask customers about military service — and, based on the response — encourage individuals to contact the county or state VA for assistance.



New and Enhanced VA Benefits Provided to Caregivers of Veterans

Unprecedented Law Augments Commitment to Nation's Most Vulnerable Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching the first of a series of new and enhanced services supporting family caregivers of seriously ill and injured Veterans. In May 2010, President Obama signed the *Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010* legislation authorizing VA to establish a wide range of new services to support certain caregivers of eligible Post-9/11 Veterans.

"Caregivers make tremendous sacrifices every day to help Veterans of all eras who served this nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "They are critical partners with VA in the recovery and comfort of ill and injured Veterans, and they deserve our continued training, support and gratitude."

"DAV is happy to hear that caregivers of Veterans are getting additional support and services to care for our nation's heroes and unprecedented new services for our most recent severely ill and injured," said David W. Gorman, executive director of the Washington Headquarters of the Disabled American Veterans. "We understand there are challenges to implementing the new law, including ensuring that critically ill and injured Veterans of all eras are similarly supported."

In addition to the new benefits and services for eligible Veterans who were disabled in the line of duty since September 11, 2001 (Post-9/11 Veterans), the VA will also begin providing enhanced benefits and services to caregivers of Veterans of all eras who are already enrolled in VA care. For a comprehensive list, visit:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2048>

News Briefs Con't.

Grand Opening of Carroll, Iowa's CBOC

Carroll County has a new community-based VA clinic. Carroll's new CBOC offers many advantages...Veterans can receive medical and mental health services closer



Carroll CBOC Ribbon Cutting

to their home and may avoid traveling to Des Moines for care. Carroll's CBOC will have a primary care provider to coordinate care on an ongoing basis, and will remain eligible for specialty outpatient care, inpatient care, and all other entitlements with VA Central Iowa Health System. The new clinic is 9,805 square feet, has covered parking, and nearby dining. The clinic will serve approximately 2,500 area veterans. On staff they will have a primary care doctor, one RN, one LPN, and two health technicians.

The ribbon cutting ceremony was held on February 18th, 2011; the clinic saw its first patients on February 22nd.

The Carroll CBOC is located at: 311 South Clark Street, Suite 275, Carroll, IA 51401. Operating hours are 7:30 a.m. — 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday - closed holidays and weekends. During regular hours call 712.794.6780 or 855.794.6780 toll free.

Online Chat Feature

Applying online for VA health services is easier and faster than ever! The online 10-10EZ "Application for Health Benefits" now features a chat function. Veterans can now receive live assistance when completing the form. Like the removal of the signature requirement, the online web chat feature is part of the VA's efforts to streamline the enrollment process. Implementing technological enhancements that reduce the enrollment processing times provide Veterans with useful options in accessing their health benefits.

For more information, and to apply for VA health care services, go to the Online 10-10EZ Application. Visit: <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/Form/1010ez.pdf>

Eligibility Verification Reports Due

John Halstead, Veterans Benefits Specialist in the IDVA Camp Dodge office has issued the following reminder:

Veterans or surviving spouses in receipt of VA pension need to return their annual Eligibility Verification Reports (EVR) as soon as possible or their VA pension will be suspended. For more information, contact John at the IDVA office: 515.242.5327 or email him: john.halstead@iowa.gov.



Flag Presentation

Following the Carroll CBOC ribbon cutting, IDVA Executive Director Jodi Tymeson presented the three flags that flew at half-staff over the Iowa State Capitol on February 6th, the day of Shawn Muhr's funeral. (Please see a tribute to Shawn in this newsletter on page three.)

The Flags were presented by Director Tymeson to Shawn's father, Dave Muhr, and Shawn's sister, Erica.



L. to R. Tymeson, Dave Muhr, Erica Muhr

News Briefs Con't.

Veterans Beware!

— forwarded by Kevin Secor, VSO Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs

An organization called Veterans Affairs Services (VAS) is providing benefit and general information on VA and gathering personal information on veterans. This organization is not affiliated with VA in any way.

Websites with the name "vaservices" immediately after the "www" **ARE NOT** part of the Department of Veterans Affairs; the real VA website ends in ".gov". If approached or called, do not offer them any information concerning yourself or data on other veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs does not randomly call veterans, nor does it ask veterans for information which it does not already have. Do not respond to emails that suggest they are from the VA. The VA never conducts official business nor asks for personal information by email.

General Counsel requests that if you have any examples of VAS acts that violate chapter 59 of Title 38 United States Code, such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits, please pass any additional information to Mr. Daugherty at the address below:

Michael G. Daugherty
Staff Attorney
Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of General Counsel (022G2)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420



Iowa Lottery Introduces New Games for Veterans Trust Fund

Two new \$1 lottery games have been introduced that will raise money to support Iowa veterans and their families. One is an instant-scratch game called *Give Me \$20*, and the other is a pull-tab game called *American Pride*.

The sale of lottery games to benefit the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund began in July 2008. "When the project was initially discussed, the Iowa Lottery had estimated at the time that

we'd be able to raise between \$2 million and \$3 million annually for the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund. We remain right on target for a third year to do exactly that," Iowa Lottery spokesperson Mary Neubauer said.

Midway through the third year of the program, Neubauer says the lottery games have raised nearly \$7 million for the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund.



"That money is going to help folks with everything from family to individual counseling, job training, tuition reimbursement, emergency housing assistance...there are all sorts of things that veterans can receive assistance with from the Veterans Trust Fund," Neubauer said. (Source: *Radio Iowa*)

News Briefs Con't.

VA Published Final Regulation to Aid Korean War Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange

WASHINGTON - Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea will have an easier path to access quality health care and benefits under a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) final regulation that will expand the dates when illnesses caused by herbicide exposure can be presumed to be related to Agent Orange.

"VA's primary mission is to be an advocate for Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki "With this new regulation VA has cleared a path for more Veterans who served in the demilitarized zone in Korea to receive access to our quality health care and disability benefits for exposure to Agent Orange."

Under the final regulation published today in the Federal Register, VA will presume herbicide exposure for any Veteran who served between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971, in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense (DoD) to have operated in an area in or near the Korean DMZ in which herbicides were applied. Previously, VA recognized that Agent Orange exposure could only be conceded to Veterans who served in certain units along the Korean DMZ between April 1968 and July 1969.

In practical terms, eligible Veterans who have specific illnesses VA presumes to be associated with herbicide exposure do not have to prove an association between their illness and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits and ensures that Veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

Click on these links to learn about Veterans' diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure and birth defects in children of Vietnam-era Veterans: http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/birth_defects.asp and <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp>.

VA encourages Veterans with covered service in Korea who have medical conditions that may be related to Agent Orange to submit their applications for access to VA health care and compensation as soon as possible so the agency can begin processing their claims.

Individuals can go to website <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/AO/claimherbicide.htm> to get a more complete understanding of how to file a claim for presumptive conditions related to herbicide exposure, as well as what evidence is needed by VA to make a decision about disability compensation or survivors benefits.

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA's services for Veterans exposed to the chemical is available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

The regulation is available on the Office of the Federal Register website at <http://www.ofr.gov>.



News Briefs Con't.

Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act

—from Tom Beasley, Iowa Department of Education, Veteran Military Education, a summary of changes resulting from *The Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act*, otherwise known as *Law 111-377*:

More programs and training sites eligible to participate in the Post-9/11 GI Bill:

Before passage of this act, only institutions of higher learning were eligible to participate in the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The enhancement act expands eligibility to cover other forms of education and training, including certificate programs, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, flight training, and correspondence training.



Payments for Education Assistance: The law modifies amounts payable for tuition, fees, housing stipends, and book allowances under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Interval Payments: The enhancement act now only allows payments during periods when schools are temporarily closed under an Executive Order of the President or because of an emergency situation. Veterans will no longer receive education assistance when they are not in school or out of school between breaks in terms or semesters.

Cap on Tuition and Fees: Amounts payable to public institutions for veterans education would equal the actual cost of in-state tuition and fees, reduced by the amount of any institutional, state, federal, or employer-based financial assistance specifically designated to defray tuition and fee expenses. Amounts payable to private and foreign institutions is limited to the actual cost of tuition and fees or \$17,500, adjusted annually for inflation, whichever is less.

When an institution enters into a Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP) agreement with VA, it agrees to cover a portion of the student's tuition shortfall. VA then matches the institution's contribution to further reduce or eliminate the student's out-of-pocket expenses. The law will now direct VA to pay tuition and fees or "Net Financial Assistance."

Modifications to Monthly Housing Stipend: The Enhancement Act delays the annual increase in housing stipends from January 1 to August 1, the beginning of an academic year. Stipend payment rates established on August 1 would remain effective throughout the entire academic year.

National Guard: Under the law service performed by National Guardsmen called to duty by the President or the Secretary of Defense under section 502(f) of title 32, U.S. States Code, is now recognized for Post-911 eligibility.

Honorable Service Requirement: *The Enhancement Act* limits eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill for such veterans to those whose service was characterized as honorable.

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs wants the children of military personnel who died in the line of duty since September 11, 2001, to know of education scholarships similar to the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. The scholarship, which is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is named after Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry, a Texas native who died in Iraq in 2006 while disarming an explosive. For more information or assistance applying, call toll-free 1-888-442-4551, or visit the VA GI Bill Website at www.gibill.va.gov.

Eligible children may be married. Recipients are entitled to 36 months of benefits at the 100 percent level. When dependents also serve in the military, the reserves, or are veterans in their own right, eligible for education benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill for Active Duty, the Montgomery GI Bill for Selected Reserves, or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), then they would relinquish their eligibility under those programs to receive benefits under a Fry Scholarship.

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